

Documents on Diplomacy: Introduction

Teachers to Teachers: Tips for Using the Documents on Diplomacy Lesson Plans

Primary sources are the building blocks of history and provide invaluable windows into historical events. This publication gives you access to more than 300 documents from U.S. diplomatic history and pairs them with 120 teachable lessons. Students already learn the skills to evaluate cartoons, speeches, treaties, dispatches, letters and diary entries, for example, and the opportunities to enhance these skills are embedded in these lessons. As the principal authors of these lessons, we are including some suggestions regarding this “historic” publication.

Publication Highlights

1. Each lesson is connected to *educational standards of the National Council for the Social Studies*, and also includes objectives and grade levels, as well as recommended completion times. The lessons, linked to specific documents (which are provided), are further enhanced by useful resources and appropriate exercises.
2. The *activities* vary from basic to complex—higher level thinking skills to movement and dance.
3. The *resources* provided include a wide-range of materials: readings, cartoons, photographs, analysis charts, discussion guides, original art, collages of key people, events, songs, websites, and many other items that you might not have imagined using before—especially in lessons about foreign policy!
4. *Technology connections* for teachers and students to enhance the daily classroom work and extend opportunities for research and the improvement of technological research skills.
5. *Lessons placed in context*—you won’t have to spend a lot of time researching background information before teaching. You will find “Setting the Stage” contextual material and “Notes to the Teacher” suggestions to save you lesson preparation time.
6. Lessons based on the recent research of “*what works for the teen brain*”: Movement, music, patterns, novelty, dramatization, and—above all—student thinking skills and actions.

A Use in Every Classroom

There are more lessons here than any teacher could possibly complete in a school year. Choices will have to be made by you, the professional educator, because of the time constraints your standards and curriculum place on course design. You might have little room to add more material on diplomacy but it is possible to use examples from diplomacy to teach your existing standards. For instance, most standards include Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*. Our lesson, *Common Sense: Blogging in 1776*, teaches the key points by using selections from the document that deal with foreign policy.

You must especially consider the needs and expectations you have for the students you teach. If a lesson is “rated” as a 1-3 day lesson, you could choose to only do one of the suggested activities. Lessons could be combined into a unit of study or you could choose to take advantage of the resources and use them in your own lessons. Study the lessons for a wide variety of teaching ideas and adapt the ideas to suit your own approach. The choices are yours to make.

Encouragement from the authors

Please do take time to scan the contents we have created for you, beginning with the project index. Mark the lessons you could use immediately and those you could use in the future or for another course you are teaching. But overall, enjoy what we have designed for you and your students. It is indeed our pleasure to present these lessons to you.

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